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New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Ataeva, Turkmenistan, Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 46 (*continued*)

Fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

(a) Fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I call first on the representative of Benin.

Mr. Yacoubou (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): The speakers preceding me have already made statements eloquently describing the great significance of this memorable day, when the international community is commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The tone and content of the statements, in particular those of the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the General Assembly show the special interest and commitment that the United Nations has always had for matters relating to human rights.

Through the award ceremony for the human rights prizes, our Organization has shown that human rights are a matter of concern to all individuals and groups of individuals, each of whom should, in his or her own way, contribute to enhancing those rights.

The delegation of Benin welcomes this initiative and congratulates the laureates of the human rights prizes on their commitment to this great cause. The awards reflect not only merit, but also and above all they encourage us to struggle to preserve the dignity of the human person.

The importance and value that each State attaches to human rights issues should be highlighted on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary and be reflected in the way in which it commemorates this day.

Like other countries, Benin is doing its best to practice democracy and, in a culture of human rights, to celebrate this important event in a very special way. Our observance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights centres around two complementary programmes, one being carried out by the National Committee to Prepare and Organize the Fiftieth Anniversary, established by the Government, and the other arising from civil society and coordinated by the Institute on Human Rights and the Promotion of Democracy.

The overall programme includes several national and departmental seminars and workshops and several conferences and meetings to discuss the themes of the Declaration, in French and in the national languages. Some of our events are travelling programmes and are geared towards students in colleges and schools, and towards the public security forces. We also have "open

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house" days at institutions which promote and defend human rights, cultural activities focusing on human rights, particularly relating to the rights of women and children, a press campaign and radio and television broadcasts in French and in national languages. In addition we have groups travelling throughout the country to bring the message of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to people who live in the most remote corners of our country.

Our programme began on 16 November 1998 and will end on 12 December. We could not have implemented it without technical and financial assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other development partners who contributed substantially to organizing the events.

I have described in brief what Benin has been doing to commemorate this fiftieth anniversary in order to demonstrate how much the Government remains committed to promoting human rights and respect for the related international instruments, particularly the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

The objective sought in the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was to eliminate once and for all the spectre of war which twice had brought great suffering to mankind and whose main causes included the violation of human rights.

Unfortunately, however, despite all that the international community has done, the human race continues, on the eve of the twenty-first century, to witness the tragic theatre of deadly and genocidal conflicts and horrible acts, mostly because of religious fundamentalism and the exacerbation of racial, ethnic and social discrimination policies.

The international covenants on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the various international human rights conventions, constitute the effective international instruments which must help promote human rights.

The educational and informational preventive action of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004, is part of a strategy to sow in the hearts of man the seeds of peace, tolerance and non-violence.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I now call on the representative of Mozambique.

Mr. dos Santos (Mozambique): We feel greatly honoured and privileged to take part in this momentous occasion of the celebration of the golden anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This historic universal instrument has been and remains the guidepost of our relations as human beings. Celebrating the Universal Declaration is celebrating our humanity and our humanness, for to uphold the provisions of the Declaration is to uphold the reason of our being: it is respecting and protecting our dignity.

Today more than ever before, we have reasons to celebrate our achievements in the implementation of human rights instruments that aim at ensuring respect for and protection of the fundamental freedoms of all peoples. By establishing, disseminating and fulfilling the obligations stemming from international legal instruments, the international community, of which we are all an integral part, has been able to promote understanding among communities, peoples and nations. The value of international cooperation in the field of human rights has been recognized by virtually all countries of our planet.

As we gather here today to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration, we should pause and reflect on the wealth of experience we have gathered and use it to develop creative and objective approaches to the field of human rights. Such approaches should contribute towards a broader acceptance of the norms set by international human rights law. Of particular importance in this regard are the two fundamental principles of universality and indivisibility of human rights.

At the dawn of a new century and a new millennium, it is our duty to recommit and rededicate ourselves to the ultimate goal of ensuring all human rights for all. In so doing we will be paying a well-deserved tribute to all those men and women who gave their lives in defence of fundamental freedoms and rights.

We in Mozambique look to this commemoration as an occasion to educate ourselves on the scope and magnitude of human rights and fundamental freedoms, taking into account that the promotion and protection of these rights is essentially everyone's responsibility. We recognize the primary responsibility of the State to ensure the enjoyment of human rights by citizens. The Constitution of our country provides for a society of social justice in which material and spiritual well-being is created without discrimination on the basis of race,

gender, ethnic origin or religious affiliation. As we rebuild our country, coming out of a devastating war, we are developing a culture of peace based on reconciliation, tolerance, solidarity and respect for human rights.

To mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Government of Mozambique has prepared a nationwide programme of activities which involve all sectors of our society. The intention is to ensure that no one will be left out and that everyone will have an opportunity to know more about his or her rights as an individual and as part of a community. The key element of those celebrations is human rights education, because without knowledge people cannot claim their rights or report human rights violations.

Our ultimate goal is to eradicate poverty, illiteracy and disease, which constitute the major stumbling block to the enjoyment of rights and freedoms by our people. In our efforts we pay special attention to those who suffer the most: women and children. We are constantly improving our capacity to deal effectively with these challenges. In this context, we would like to underscore the need for the preservation of the integrated, interdependent and indivisible nature of all categories of rights, where political and civil rights, economic, social and cultural rights are treated equally.

We agree with the Secretary-General when he states that the right to development is the measure of the respect of all other rights. We therefore identify ourselves with the purposes and objectives of the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development.

The establishment, last July at Rome, of the International Criminal Court represents a remarkable contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights all over the world. In Rome we created an unprecedented comprehensive legal framework to safeguard human rights and bring to justice those responsible for the most heinous crimes witnessed by humanity, such as those committed recently in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Mozambique's commitment to the Universal Declaration and to our collective responsibility to ensure that the horrors and uncertainties of the past and the continued violations of fundamental human rights are not repeated in the new millennium. We must collectively devise appropriate strategies and find ways and means which will enable future generations to live in harmony, peace and sustainable development.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I call next on the representative of Monaco.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco) (*interpretation from French*): Let us cast our minds back to 10 December 1948, when the most horrible and deadly of events, spawned by hatred and contempt, is fresh in our memories.

The United Nations Charter, signed at San Francisco on 26 June 1945, entered into force on 24 October of the same year. Among its hastily constituted bodies was a Commission for progress on human rights. In December 1947, at Geneva, the Commission took the historic decision to formulate an international charter of human rights which, like the San Francisco Charter, was to consist of three parts: a preamble in the form of a solemn declaration; a binding operative part in the form of a convention, including implementation measures; and an integral judicial organ, to function as the International Court of Justice functions with respect to the Charter of the United Nations.

A working group chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, with the French professor of law René Cassin serving as Rapporteur, immediately set to work. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first element of this human rights charter, was drafted in less than a year; it was a cry of outrage from consciences horrified by what had happened and determined to rebuild on the ruins left by a savage war an international society that would be peaceful because it was more just and more humane.

We then had to wait nearly 20 years, until 16 December 1966, for the second element of the charter to be adopted: the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. And it was more than 30 years later, in July 1998, that the final part of the trilogy, the Statute of the International Criminal Court, was adopted at Rome.

This has thus been a long and difficult history, with numerous participants to whom we owe deep gratitude, a gratitude we must bear in mind as we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was proclaimed in Paris, at the Palais de Chaillot — where its message remains, carved in stone.

This solemn Declaration was adopted quietly in 1948, without opposition but not without reservations. Today, it is universally recognized. It is taught in schools and universities. It is the theme of debates and conferences and the regular subject of publications, press

reports and radio and television broadcasts. Men and women have been thrown into prison, tortured and often murdered for upholding it.

The principles it proclaims are remarkable in their significance. Even when they are not directly quoted, they inspire the basic laws, constitutions or statutes of our States. Indeed, the 1962 Constitution of Monaco devotes its Part III to these principles, thus giving them incontestable authority. Our courts are obliged to respect obligations deriving from these principles, whether they relate to ends or to means. The Principality's Supreme Court must rule on appeals on matters that could undermine these fundamental rights and freedoms. Even earlier, the 1911 Constitution had included a similar provision which was remarkable for its time.

The right to freedom, to equality, to solidarity; the rights set out in the 1948 Declaration; those of the European Convention on Human Rights, of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, of the American Convention on Human Rights: all these rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. Thus, there can be no discrimination: all men, all women and all children have the right to enjoy them.

The convictions proclaimed in the Universal Declaration are at the very heart of every society. Their roots run deep in the great cultural and religious traditions and in the ethical and moral precepts that over history have moved peoples in the direction of greater progress and greater justice. While, owing to the great diversity among civilizations, the way in which these precepts are expressed varies, the basic values that are the cornerstone of the Declaration are fundamentally the same for us all. Those to whom the United Nations Human Rights Prize was awarded this morning bear witness to this.

In 1968, when the Declaration was 20 years old, the Tehran International Conference on Human Rights confirmed the general view that the peoples of the world had the same concept of the inherent inalienable and inviolable rights of all members of the human family. At the same time, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization published a collection of texts drawn from the most diverse traditions and eras. The very variety of the origins of those texts, coupled with the profound unity of their message, illustrated the universality, in time and in space, of people's desire for and rightful claim, as stated in the preface, to the right to be a human being.

On the eve of the Second World War, when weapons in Europe were beginning to thunder, Paul Valéry wrote that,

> "The wind is rising ... we must attempt to live."
> (*Charmes, Le Cimetière Marin*)

The wind did rise, and it devastated the world. Those who survived the cataclysm wrote down in letters of gold on 10 December 1948 the principles that the human race should follow to ensure that human beings could live in peace and dignity. The Principality of Monaco, which subscribes to the principles and norms-recognized in the instruments of the United Nations, appreciates the emotion and solemnity associated with this commemoration today. We ardently hope that this event will serve as an opportunity for real progress to be made in recognizing and respecting those principles so that human rights will become not just a shared ideal to attain, but a daily reality for all peoples and nations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I now call on the representative of Iceland.

Mr. Ingólfsson (Iceland): Today, the world celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since it was signed, over 60 human rights instruments have been adopted, which constitute an international standard of human rights. The variety of procedures for monitoring State compliance has also grown in scope and importance. Public awareness and support for human rights has grown considerably. Governments can no longer ignore human rights standards without facing international scrutiny and criticism. Human rights are truly universal and indivisible.

Nevertheless, it is a sad fact that grave violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms continue in many parts of the world. Let us therefore hope that this anniversary commemoration will strengthen the ability of our Organization to meet the challenges of the international human rights agenda and the demands of the international community for more effective action in this field.

In the ongoing struggle for human rights, it is important to strengthen the tools and mechanisms that are available to the international human rights system. Human rights experts and human rights defenders are of the view that the best way to secure the adherence of Governments to human rights treaties is to strengthen

existing measures of implementation, in terms of both State reporting and petition procedures. A crucial element in this quest is to increase the capacity of the Secretariat to render needed support services to the treaty-monitoring bodies.

In strengthening the State reporting system, we should keep in mind the positive experience of active participation by non-governmental organizations in this work.

Special emphasis should also be placed on completing the drafting of optional protocols permitting petitioning under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child aimed, *inter alia*, at preventing children under 18 years of age from being recruited as soldiers.

My Government welcomes the establishment of the International Criminal Court and emphasizes the importance of providing the Court with all the necessary means to carry out its mandate, thus giving the fight against crimes against humanity the status that it deserves and needs.

Allow me to recall the launching in 1995 of the Decade for Human Rights Education and to express the hope that its goals and objectives will be achieved. Public awareness of individual rights and responsibilities and public participation are perhaps the best guarantee for ensuring the observance of and respect for human rights in a free and democratic society. Effective human rights education available to all, young and old alike, is essential for this purpose.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

Mr. Legwaila (Botswana): The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 50 years ago today was a milestone in the annals of human history. Sovereign States agreed to be bound by a common standard of human rights. That was in itself a feat of no mean consequence. The national interests and political orientation of the key international players of the day were not mutually supportive. Mutual suspicions between the East and the West persisted, as the cold war would later demonstrate. And the colonial masters were not comfortable with the new international political dispensation vis-à-vis their far-flung empires. Yet the Declaration was born precisely at that time. This was a momentous achievement.

The Universal Declaration derives its legal force and moral authority directly from the Charter of the United Nations. Article 1, paragraph 3 of the Charter reads in part,

> "and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion".

Is it any wonder, then, that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is sometimes credited, and rightly so, with contributing immensely to the emancipation of colonial countries and peoples, which today comprise the majority of the membership of the United Nations? Colonialism was simply an impediment to the enjoyment of basic human rights.

There is no denying that considerable progress has been made in the field of human rights since 10 December 1948, when the Universal Declaration was adopted. Human rights issues have become a permanent feature of the agenda of every session of the General Assembly. The Commission on Human Rights is doing a commendable job, without fear or favour. There is today growing acceptance, albeit grudging by some, that the protection of and respect for human rights is indeed universal and indivisible and that it cuts across civilizations and cultures. Gross human rights violations anywhere and everywhere today become the immediate and unabashed concern of everyone and receive the opprobrium of everybody, without fear of being accused of interfering in the internal affairs of States.

The number of human rights legal instruments and organizations at the national, regional and subregional levels has increased drastically since the Universal Declaration was adopted, which is a clear manifestation of the commitment of the international community to the promotion of greater observance and enjoyment of human rights throughout the world. Human rights activists, which we are increasingly all becoming, are the most daring and bravest people one can come across on Earth.

National constitutions in most countries now have not only a bill of rights, but also human rights safeguards. In the absence of an international legal machinery, the Security Council was forced to institute ad hoc Tribunals to try the perpetrators of genocide and to oppose impunity in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and it triggered the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court to bring sponsors

and supporters of similar crimes to justice. It is hoped that the International Criminal Court will soon become another key player in the struggle for the promotion of respect for human rights.

Lastly and by no means least, the establishment of the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was the pinnacle of the struggle for the promotion and protection of human rights. The amount of vital and commendable work that the High Commissioner has already carried out — in monitoring the situations of human rights in democracies in transition, as well as in human rights education and public information and in promoting human rights through dialogue with the Member States concerned — bears testimony that the creation of the post was long overdue. We salute the High Commissioner, Mrs. Mary Robinson, for a job well done. We encourage her to continue the good work.

As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights commences another 50-year journey into the next millennium, let us redouble our efforts and make the system of international human rights instruments more effective. Enough progress has been registered, and the scales are increasingly tipped in favour of the greater protection of and respect for human rights. We should now forge ahead with vigour and even greater effort, until the tenets of the Declaration are truly universal and the world is rid of the demons that guided the perpetrators of genocide and other crimes against humanity in Bosnia, Cambodia, Rwanda, apartheid South Africa and wherever tyranny and totalitarianism have reared their ugly heads in the past 50 years. It is time the international community said "never again" to these horrendous crimes and their perpetrators.

As for my delegation, I can assure the Assembly of our unflinching commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as the basis for peace, security and prosperity in our country.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): The Secretariat has just informed the Chair that Ms. Astrid Heiberg, President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, who was to have been the first of the observers to speak, cannot speak in her assigned place during the evening meeting because of urgent, unforeseen circumstances outside New York.

May I take it that the Assembly agrees to hear Ms. Astrid Heiberg at the end of this afternoon's meeting?

It was so decided.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Tunisia associates itself with the international community in commemorating of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and underscores the role played by the United Nations to promote human rights. My country has contributed to the elaboration of the United Nations approach in this regard. It has also worked for the implementation of the universal values agreed upon, as well as for the principle of the comprehensiveness and interdependence of these rights. It welcomes in this respect the adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration of human rights defenders after 13 years of negotiations.

The democratic options that Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic, has established in Tunisia — an approach based on the protection and promotion of human rights and the dissemination of the culture of human rights — represents a fundamental and an irreversible choice. It stems from a strong belief that human beings cannot be full citizens unless they fully enjoy their dignity and all their rights in the framework of a safe and stable society and of global sustainable development.

During the past 11 years Tunisia has undertaken many far-reaching reforms in different fields. These include the amendment of the Constitution with a view to the consolidation of political pluralism; opening the way for the participation of political parties and enhancing freedom of opinion and other freedoms; the abolition of emergency courts and forced labour; the regulation of pre-trial incommunicado detention and preventive detention; bringing legislation into line with international human rights treaties and conventions, which Tunisia has been among the first countries to ratify; the strengthening of the freedom of women and their equality with men; the promulgation of a special code for the rights of children and a law for the protection of the elderly; and the protection of the handicapped and other special categories of people. All these reforms have given concrete form to Tunisia's vision of the comprehensive character of human rights and the inseparable and complementary links between all its dimensions. They have given form to its belief in the universality of the principles and values of human rights. Human rights culture has become an integral part of the programmes of our educational system at all levels.

In its economic, social and cultural policy, our country has pursued an integrated strategy aimed at the promotion of man in all fields. Convinced that human rights cannot be fully achieved without ensuring a dignified life for all categories of society, combating poverty, promoting job opportunities and consolidating the values of solidarity in society so as to protect it from the dangers of poverty and marginalization, our country has set up a national strategy for the eradication of poverty. This strategy has made it possible to reduce the poverty rate from 11 per cent in the mid-1980s to 6 per cent now.

We have created a national solidarity fund that collects voluntary contributions from individuals and enterprises in order to develop remote areas and those lacking the basic conditions for life and that do not meet the conventional feasibility criteria for economic development programmes. This fund has been reinforced by a national solidarity bank that provides financing for small projects carried out by artisans, skilled workers and young people who wish to create their own businesses. The national solidarity fund is the most important pillar of our strategy. It has allowed the integration into the economic cycle of many people from those needy categories and the financing of many small and medium-sized projects for low-income categories.

I would like in conclusion to stress that the choice made by my country stems from the deep-rooted civilizational and cultural values of Tunisian society — values maintained within the framework of a constant evolution that has allowed for the consolidation of human rights in all their dimensions, the realization of pluralism on the ground, the promotion of liberties and the consolidation of civil society. In this approach we have taken into account our society's specific character, without undermining the principle of universality and our belief in it. No one in this world can pretend to be perfect in this field or impose one set model on all peoples. Nor can anyone claim the right to give lessons to others.

We would like on this occasion to emphasize the great importance that should be accorded to the right of peoples to development and to the elimination of all obstacles to the effective exercise of that right. The international community should therefore work seriously for the consolidation of the values of tolerance among and inside States so as to eradicate the practices of extremism and terrorism in all their forms and to prevent the threats of conflicts, exclusion and marginalization, for the sake of all humanity's future, its progress, security and stability.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I now call on the representative of Mongolia.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): Today the world is solemnly commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has set new, unprecedented high standards for protecting human rights and dignity. Since the Declaration's adoption in 1948, those standards have been strengthened and developed by numerous treaties and conventions. Some of the human rights standards are becoming truly universal. Besides standard-setting, the very approach to human rights issues is changing: from proclamation of the basic rights and freedoms to elaboration of legally binding norms and their incorporation in national legislation; from introduction of reporting procedures to monitoring compliance; from condemnation to prevention.

The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights was another milestone in further promoting and expanding the ideals and provisions of the Universal Declaration. Thus, the universality of human rights has been widely recognized.

The comprehensive approach to the interrelationship between human rights, democracy and development, as well as recognition of the indivisibility of all human rights and the need to respect and implement them on an equal footing, are other major contributions of the World Conference.

We all are proud of these achievements. At the same time, we should not forget that today 1.5 billion people live in abject poverty; they cannot meet basic human needs. Political and civil rights are still being denied; repression and oppression — even torture — are far from being eradicated. Lately the world has become alarmed by rising intolerance, genocide, xenophobia, terrorism, extremism, aggressive nationalism and denial of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Therefore, much more still remains to be done.

We may recall that 50 years ago, two complementary, commanding and truly revolutionary ideas were before the General Assembly: the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the establishment of an international criminal court. For half a century, the latter had not been materialized. Numerous attempts to create the court were without success. But the ideal lived on. This year the world made a major, in fact a historic, breakthrough in Rome.

The establishment of the International Criminal Court must be regarded as the ultimate fulfilment of the Universal Declaration. It supplies the long-sought missing link: prosecution and punishment for gross violations. Furthermore, in some cases, the Rome Statute extends even further. Thus, an accused person will have all the human rights protection needed to ensure due process, a fair trial and appropriate punishment. All these guarantees are to ensure that only real and substantive violations will be brought before and tried by the Court. In this respect, it could be said that the Rome Statute complements the Universal Declaration.

The Mongolian Constitution of 1992 was drawn up with the active participation of the people themselves and their duly elected representatives in the Parliament. It is based on progressive ideals and existing international standards. Since 1990 Mongolia has been pursuing democratic reforms simultaneously in the political and economic spheres. The people have been exercising their right to choose their head of State and representatives in the Parliament. They are exercising all other political and civil rights and freedoms as well. The Constitution also guarantees the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights.

However, due to economic realities, while Mongolia's economy is in transition to a market economy, with all the attendant difficulties, the overwhelming majority of the population cannot fully enjoy these rights and freedoms. In fact, the living standard of a sizeable portion of the population has fallen, while poverty and unemployment have increased. The vulnerable groups of society — children, women and the elderly — are suffering the most. In order to overcome all these and other difficulties, the Government is mobilizing all resources and possibilities and is implementing different programmes and projects. We are certain that in due course Mongolia will be able to overcome these difficulties.

Human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. Therefore, let us enter the new millennium with a redoubled commitment to ensure these rights and freedoms for all.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I call on the representative of Singapore.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is clearly a landmark development in the history of man. On this there can be no doubt. It is remarkable that it took humankind several thousand years after the origins of human society to agree on a simple truth: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 1*).

Even if it may have come a few thousand years late, it represents a significant leap forward from where humankind used to be, when fellow human beings were routinely used as slaves, serfs, conquered or colonial subjects and often beaten or tortured like animals. Such behaviour is no longer legally acceptable, even though it continues to persist informally. The Universal Declaration is therefore the cornerstone for the discourse on human rights standards around the world today.

Despite these significant achievements, however, we, the inheritors of this Declaration, cannot shy away from asking difficult or uncomfortable questions. Does the Declaration represent the peak of human achievement or a significant plateau upon which to build? Can a Declaration written in the peculiar historical environment of the post-Second World War period remain the last word on human ideals as human societies and civilizations change and evolve?

These are not easy questions. However, documents, like human beings, languish when their lovers are uncritical or their critics are unloving. They thrive when they are subject to scrutiny by loving critics. This is our mission in our remarks today.

First, the Universal Declaration is not a perfect document. No human document is. Eleanor Roosevelt said,

> "Naturally, it is not a perfect document ... Being, as it must be, a composite document to meet the thoughts of so many different peoples, there must be a considerable number of compromises." (*An Analysis of Human Rights Principles, as Defined by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in United States Constitutions: Implications for Social Policy, by Joseph M. Wronka, p. 145*)

She was right. It took 85 sessions and 1,200 different votes to get the Declaration adopted.

Secondly, the pursuit of human rights is often a noble goal. But, from the very beginning, it has also been used as an instrument in political warfare. A thoughtful historian, describing the drafting of the Declaration, noted the following:

"The extent of genuine concern for human rights is difficult to judge, but an important motive — in particular for the most powerful States — was the need to avoid criticism and, at the same time, to have an opportunity to criticize others. Human rights had become a weapon in the ideological warfare between the East and West led by the Great Powers." (*Human Rights as International Consensus, The Making of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1945-1948, by Ashild Sannoy, p. 52*)

The same historian said that one of the key Governments involved in the drafting had admitted that "it was a weapon of political warfare" (ibid., p. 53). In short, the drafters had both noble and ignoble motives. It is shocking to realize today that much of the Declaration was drafted then by major colonial Powers that saw no contradiction between colonial rule and human rights. Double standards were present in 1948. They continue to endure in 1998. Our key challenge today is to ensure that human rights are not used again as an instrument for political warfare. We should therefore commit ourselves to cooperation, and not confrontation or destructive finger-pointing.

Thirdly, the world has changed. So have humankind's needs and concerns. Emerging out of the brutal experience of fascism and totalitarianism, the drafters of the Universal Declaration were obsessed with limiting the impact of the State upon the individual. This was, is and will be a noble goal. But this led the drafters to speak only of the rights and not of the responsibilities of individuals. The word "responsibility" is not mentioned once in the Declaration, although the word "duties" is used once in article 29. The pursuit of "rights" over "responsibilities" has led, in some Western societies, to a culture of permissiveness and social problems which are viewed with some concern by more traditional societies. Each society has to find its right balance of rights and responsibilities. Indeed, the idea of responsibility underpins the major faiths and value systems of the world. The golden rule of many religions is "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you", and not "You have the right to demand of others that they treat you well".

Recognizing that there was an urgent need to balance rights with responsibilities, a group of senior global statesmen, including Helmut Schmidt, Malcom Fraser, Anand Panyarachun, Jimmy Carter — who won the United Nations Human Rights Prize today — and a few others have endorsed a draft universal declaration of human responsibilities. They recommended that it be discussed on this fiftieth anniversary. It is puzzling that we are not having such a discussion today. Is this by accident or by design? If by design, whose design, and why? To be honest, we ask these questions, because we are aware that there have been furtive manoeuvrings behind the scenes to prevent such a declaration from being discussed here today.

Fourthly and finally, in conclusion, to avoid any misunderstanding, let me reiterate once again that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights represents a great leap forward in the destiny of man. It has served as a source of guidance and inspiration to millions of people around the world, but we continue to live in a far from perfect world, with billions mired in poverty and even starvation, as many said in their speeches this morning. At best, less than one third of the world's population enjoys the rights we are celebrating today.

We have all heard of the fable of the child and the emperor's clothes. If this child were to walk into our room today and ask what we are celebrating, we would have to answer: We are celebrating the progress of human rights on our planet. He or she, this child, could then well ask: How can you celebrate when so few human beings on this planet enjoy these rights or have experienced any real improvement in their human condition since the Declaration was issued in 1948? How do we honestly answer the question of this child?

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I call on the Under-Secretary of Human Rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic.

Ms. Lorenzo Alcalá (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have gathered in this Assembly to commemorate one of the most important events in the history of humankind for the full respect of the human person. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the clearest and most forceful commitment of the universal conscience to ensuring that the ideologies of death, hatred and war were never again to reign among human beings. Our remembrance and sincere tribute go to those men and women who were able to embody in the letter and the spirit of this Declaration the purest aspirations of humankind.

We can assert that, in these 50 years, the defence of the dignity, respect and freedom of the individual has achieved momentum of a strength never seen in past centuries. This assertion is not contradicted by the

equally evident fact that this process has been neither peaceful nor smooth. My country is a clear example of that. The 1970s were especially dark years in most of Latin America. Authoritarian regimes flouted respect of the individual with an unforgettable balance of pain and death.

The following decade, however, was brightened by the return of democracy and a growing respect for human rights in the continent. Today, all nations have recognized the Universal Declaration and most States Members of the United Nations have also signed the main international pacts and conventions on this matter. In this half-century, we have also enshrined the indivisibility and universality of human rights.

Respect for these rights is fundamental to achieving the two other main goals of our Organization: maintaining international peace and security and promoting economic and social development. Civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights are closely linked to one another and to development and democracy. That is why policies that hinder the promotion and protection of even one of those rights at the expense of the others cannot be justified.

That is our interpretation of the applicability of the right to development as a process that seeks sustained and progressive improvement of the well-being of the individual and of the group to which the individual belongs, together with the full exercise of his or her public freedoms. We share the opinion that the various historical, social and cultural realities must be respected, but we also assert that those national or regional particularities cannot justify policies that disregard the universally recognized inherent rights of the human person. We insist that individual States are primarily accountable for the protection of human rights within their borders. Hence, they are accountable before the international community when those obligations are not respected. Argentina was fully committed in its participation in the establishment of the International Criminal Court, the ultimate embodiment of the internationalization of human rights.

In spite of all the progress achieved, intolerance, racial discrimination, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, neo-Nazism, ethnic cleansing, armed conflicts among minorities, deep social differences and extreme poverty persist. Those harsh realities should keep us ready and willing to cooperate, through our Governments, the United Nations Secretariat and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to ensure that the struggle against these anomalies and social injustices is not used as a pretext to set back progress on human rights.

I want to remind this Assembly that, through the constitutional reform of 1994, the Argentine people accorded the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the main international pacts and conventions on this matter, a higher status than that of its domestic legislation. We have adapted our laws to these main instruments. We have also followed the recommendations made by the treaty bodies, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the 1993 Vienna Conference and in its Programme of Action, enacting protective policies to overcome old injustices and to compensate the victims of authoritarianism in the 1970s.

The Argentine Government has established two under-secretariats for human rights to elaborate and implement domestic and international policies on the subject. One, which I have the honour to head, is in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the other in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, chaired by Mrs. Inés Pérez Suárez, who is here with us at this meeting and has developed an important programme in connection with this commemoration. The Argentine Parliament has also decided to participate in this historic event in the person of its national representative, Mr. Javier Mouriño. Our joint presence here is eloquent testimony to the commitment of the Government of Argentina to human rights.

Lastly, on behalf of the people and Government of my country, I would like to reiterate our acknowledgement to the men and women who, in these brief 50 years, have openly or anonymously ennobled the cause of human rights with their fight in defence of the rights of every man and woman in this world.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I call on the National Secretary for Human Rights of Brazil.

Mr. Gregori (Brazil) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour, on behalf of the delegation of Brazil, to address the Assembly as Member States celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a particular pleasure for me to do so today, when the Organization has generously included me among the recipients of the United Nations Human Rights Prize. I am grateful in all humility. This is a tribute that goes beyond me personally and which I accept as a tribute to my country, its Government and civil society,

for the courage, transparency and determination with which we in Brazil have embraced the cause of promoting human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights reaffirmed 50 years ago that freedom, justice and peace in the world are based on the recognition of the inherent dignity of the human person and of the equal and inalienable rights of every member of the human family. These rights are not a concession which States make to individuals. They are inherent attributes of the human condition and can therefore be neither denied nor abrogated. This occasion should inspire reflection on how the norms and principles of the Declaration have become a reality in the daily lives of the great majority of individuals.

Unfortunately, however, the ideals of peace, justice, freedom, equality and social equity are not yet the reality for everyone. The fundamental right to life remains threatened in many parts of the world. We frequently witness terrible massacres and genocide motivated by racial hatred and ethnic conflicts. And, as though that were not enough, the spectres of poverty, hunger and inadequate education, health and housing conditions are the sad daily realities of over half of the world's population.

Consolidation of the democratic process is vital to the exercise of citizenship in the promotion of human rights. States have the primary responsibility in this respect, but ongoing involvement with civil society is required in that task. International cooperation is another element of fundamental importance. No country can do without that cooperation, which preferably should be channelled through the United Nations.

Allow me to point out that under the leadership of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the Government of Brazil has given clear proof of its commitment to human rights. In this respect, the National Programme of Human Rights, adopted in May 1996, raised the promotion of human rights to a priority level in public policy administration. Civil society participated actively in defining the Programme, whose implementation is the responsibility of the National Secretariat for Human Rights, which I have the honour to head.

Another concrete example of that commitment has been the adoption of the law of the disappeared, in the drafting of which I am proud to have participated. That law recognized the State's responsibility and made possible financial reparations to the families of the persons disappeared during the regime of exception.

The process of human and social development can be interpreted as a gradual and progressive appropriation of human rights by the peoples. In this respect, we believe it would be useful for the United Nations to prepare a world report on the attainment of the three generations of all kinds of human rights in order to assist in the preparation of public development policies that are focused on the promotion of human rights. The preparation of that report could be a shared objective of the international community for the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Towards that end, it is my honour to propose that a preparatory meeting be held in Brazil with the participation of the High Commissioner, the member States of the Commission on Human Rights and representatives of civil society. We believe that this would constitute an effective step towards the universal attainment of human rights in the coming millennium.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I thank the National Secretary for Human Rights of Brazil for his statement, and I now call on the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Simonović (Croatia): The Universal Declaration of Human Rights represents the living spirit of the United Nations that has brought us together today to commemorate, to assess and to indicate the priorities for future development in the field of human rights. To speak about 50 years of the Universal Declaration in less than five minutes is possible only by doing so together with more than 100 fellow speakers, each contributing an individual tune to the common symphony.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has demonstrated a great ability to unite the peoples of the world. It has been translated into more than 200 languages, bringing together different countries, cultures, religions and histories. What we are commemorating today is the fiftieth anniversary of our consensus on what human rights are as part of the universal human heritage.

During the past 50 years, the Universal Declaration has vividly shown that it was not merely a list of good wishes. Rather, it has proved to be a living document and programme of action that has inspired different nations, international and national organizations, non-governmental organizations and many individuals to fight

for the recognition and protection of the human rights set out in the Declaration. Even though the language of the Declaration has not been altered, its operational significance has changed dramatically. The role of Governments, the scope of beneficiaries and the influence of human rights defenders have all evolved significantly from what they were half a century ago. Despite these positive developments, the ultimate goal of the Declaration, namely, "All human rights for all", is still far ahead of us.

Our session today is a unique opportunity to examine where we actually stand with regard to the implementation of the Declaration and universal protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development. It is our task to assess the implementation of the Declaration, but we should also go further in following its spirit and the very logic of human rights protection.

As we have experienced in the work of the General Assembly this year, the right to development is still perceived as controversial. Indeed, efforts to secure its recognition through the adoption of resolutions are raising questions as to how the evolving human rights, for example rights in the area of the environment and human genetics, should be recognized. What we need is a consensus on a new human rights concept for the twenty-first century.

This year has brought some important successes in transforming human rights ideals into concrete international procedures for their enforcement. The trend to enhance the efficacy of international human rights protection has been demonstrated by the recent adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. Another promising sign is the consensus reached in the adoption yesterday of the declaration on the rights of human rights defenders. However, the greatest responsibility for the protection of human rights remains with individual Governments.

The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and the constitutional law on human rights were both inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the rights set forth in the Declaration are fully reflected in national legislation. In my country violations of human rights related to the armed aggression carried out against it demonstrate that we need strong and effective international preventive mechanisms and that the concept of international peace and security must include concerns for human rights.

As part of the post-conflict settlement, a task facing my Government is the development of further proactive strategies in favour of promotion of and respect for human rights. These include full implementation of programmes for reconciliation and confidence-building and the return of refugees and displaced persons. Perhaps, because of all these reasons, in Croatia special importance is being attached to the fiftieth anniversary, with numerous events being organized by the Government, civil society and non-governmental organizations, academia, students' groups and the general public.

Let me conclude. All of us here are not merely representatives of our Governments, but also representatives of the peoples of the world. The history of human rights is the history of the United Nations, and the future of human rights is the United Nations future, the future of our peoples and the future of humankind.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I now call on the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Akunwafor (Nigeria): Today's celebration is a momentous occasion, marking not only the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action at the World Conference on Human Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides a prescription for mankind on individual rights and freedoms, is built on the fundamental principle of the inherent dignity and worth of the human person. This dignity and the rights to freedom and equality which derive therefrom are undeniable.

This occasion offers us the opportunity to make a sober reflection on the course and direction of human rights in all parts of the world, to assess the extent to which the Declaration has become a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations, and to refocus attention on those rights and freedoms so essential to the maintenance of human dignity. We believe that the enjoyment of these rights is inalienable. They include civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights, the protection and advancement of the rights of women, children and minorities and, in general, the right to development. We hope that the opportunity will be utilized to promote the renewed spirit of shared responsibility, international cooperation and enhanced understanding while shunning the tendencies towards fault-finding, selectivity and partiality in the assessment of human rights situations within Member States.

It was refreshing and highly welcome, indeed, to note that in her report to the fifty-third session of the

General Assembly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson, had drawn attention to the large-scale violation of economic, social and cultural rights. In the past, such reports had dealt mainly with civil and political rights. She appropriately referred to widespread poverty as the most disturbing development of our time, a situation the Vienna Declaration had equally described as constituting an obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights.

In the course of the last 50 years, human rights have become a legitimate issue in international relations. How a country treats its citizens is no longer a matter for its own exclusive determination, Article 2, paragraph 7, of the United Nations Charter notwithstanding. Others can and do express a claim to know and show their concern. The last 50 years, therefore, has witnessed an emerging global culture of human rights as well as a body of international law on human rights. However, there is the need for the international community to treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner on the same footing, and with the same emphasis as stressed in the Vienna Programme of Action. This is due to the universality, individuality, interdependency and interrelationship of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction.

As we approach the next millennium, the world is witnessing more social problems than solutions to the challenges of an increasingly interdependent world. The nature of many of today's conflicts is intra-State, often with devastating consequences for civilians, particularly women and children. These conflicts are sometimes fought by irregular armies and militias who pay little or no attention to international humanitarian laws, including the laws of war. This has engendered widespread violations of human rights in conflict situations. The most dramatic of these violations led to the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Thus at the dawn of a new millennium, and in spite of the advances in technology and human civilization, the international community is still grappling with situations that tend to bring out the worst in mankind.

Nigeria has acceded to and ratified all the core international human rights instruments, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. On 17 June 1996, Nigeria inaugurated the National Human Rights Commission to deal with all matters relating to the protection of human rights according to the Paris Principles, as recommended in the Vienna Programme of Action. I am convinced that these institutional mechanisms have the capacity to contribute to raising the living standards of Nigerians and their enjoyment of human rights in a larger sense.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I now call on the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to request that the full text of my statement be distributed, as it attempts to contribute to our thinking on this issue and contains a few proposals. I shall simply read a summary of it now.

Fifty years ago the General Assembly gathered to adopt, by a vote of 48 States in favour and 8 abstentions, a resolution that has become a source of inspiration and that laid the groundwork for progress in international cooperation in the field of human rights. Even with its many limitations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights constituted an important step forward and an historic event. But it failed to meet the chief demands of the overwhelming majority of countries in the South: self-determination and development. No connection was established between rights and duties, either those of individuals or those of peoples. Human solidarity in particular was left unmentioned.

In a globalized world, the United Nations has the responsibility to prevent the impact of the economic crisis, which is threatening to become global, from falling mainly on the poor, the hungry, the sick, the illiterate, the women, the children and the elderly of the developing countries.

Even without the crisis, 12 million people starve to death every year; 12 million children under the age of five die every year from malnutrition and curable or preventable diseases; and 600 million people under the age of 40 will die this year. More than 1.3 billion people live below the poverty level, 841 million go hungry, 880 million lack medical care, 1.3 billion have no potable water, 2 billion have no electricity and 885 million are illiterate. A year from now, 95 per cent of those suffering from AIDS will be living in countries in the South.

In certain industrialized countries, taken together, 75 billion dollars are spent on pet food, cosmetics and cigarettes. Meanwhile, the entire developing world

spends less than half of that on food, health and basic human education. The undeniable result is that in the 1990s we have seen a widening of the gaping abyss between rich and poor. The neo-liberal globalization that is being forced upon us goes hand-in-hand with poverty and social polarization. If we do not take action, economic, social and cultural rights will continue to be the invisible part of the United Nations human rights machinery and the right to development will prove to be illusory.

Since 1947, the adoption of the measures contained in, or of the implementation programme of, the International Bill of Human Rights has remained an outstanding matter. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries recently expressed its conviction that the Declaration on the Right to Development, because it integrates all human rights and is oriented towards action, is the programmatic element missing International Bill of Human Rights. Cuba reaffirms the need to include the Declaration on the Right to Development in the International Bill of Human Rights.

If we wish to enhance the enjoyment of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration, we must urgently undertake the drafting of a new international bill of human and people's rights. Strengthening the legislative groundwork for international cooperation on human rights cannot, however, replace the need for a new political will for dialogue and mutual respect between the countries of the North and the South. The principles of objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity must be the foundations for concerted action to promote and protect human rights throughout the world.

Human solidarity is no longer just an altruistic choice; it has become a factor for the survival of humankind. Only respect for the principles of the Charter and recognition of the diversity that enriches us will enable us to move forward towards the full exercise of all human rights.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I call on the Attorney General of Ecuador, His Excellency Mr. Ramón Jiménez Carbo.

Mr. Jiménez Carbo (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Fifty years ago, the community of nations established a new world organization which resolved to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

Shortly thereafter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted — an action that we are solemnly recalling today. Yes, we are doing so solemnly; however, more importantly, we are doing so with resolve and with the genuine conviction on the part of the international community that this Declaration should be part of the real daily experience of countries throughout the world.

The Universal Declaration is today, at the dawn of the new millennium, more important and valid than ever before in the history of humankind, as it means — and will in the future mean — hope for innumerable human beings throughout the world. Today we are rightly paying tribute to those visionaries who, half a century ago, met together in the *Palais de Chaillot* and bequeathed to the world this Declaration, the source of all national and international legislation with regard to the protection of human rights. The fact that my country, Ecuador, participated actively in the small nucleus of States Members of the United Nations which at that time drafted the Universal Declaration is an enormous honour, and today we continue to work in an effective manner. In this context, yesterday we participated in the adoption by the General Assembly of the human rights defenders declaration.

I should like to underscore the fact that Ecuador is a country that is deeply committed to the defence and promotion of human rights, and we are present today in this historic meeting in order to reiterate our determination to work so that the ideals contained in the Universal Declaration may become a reality for all the men, women and children of this world. As evidence of its conviction, Ecuador has actively worked for human rights in world forums, particularly in the United Nations.

In this context, it is sufficient to recall the extraordinary work done in this very forum by our current Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador José Ayala Lasso, who led the efforts to create the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. To the honour of our country, Ambassador Ayala Lasso was appointed the first United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and in the exercise of that office he laid the groundwork which enabled the Office of the High Commissioner to become an institution able to lead in a more effective and coordinated way the mechanisms for the defence and promotion of human rights within the United Nations system.

As evidence of the fact that Ecuador is resolved to make human rights a reality in the lives of its citizens, the national Government of Ecuador this year enacted, as a law of the Republic, the National Plan for Human Rights to protect and promote, within the country, civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights and the right to both personal and material development. The Plan also protects the rights of minorities and the most vulnerable groups in Ecuadorian society, including women, children, the elderly, the indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian populations, sexual minorities and the disabled.

I wish to emphasize that the National Plan was prepared through a process of close cooperation between the national Government and civil society. A few days ago, from 17 to 23 October, a high-level mission from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights visited Ecuador in order to provide advice with regard to the implementation of the National Plan, and gave high praise to both Ecuador and the Plan, as well as to the alliance between the Government and civil society that was established for the implementation of that plan in the Republic of Ecuador. On that occasion, I had the honour of welcoming in the Office of the Attorney General Mr. Brian Burdekin, Principal Adviser to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We pledge that through our efforts, and with the cooperation of organs such as the United Nations, a genuine culture of peace and of human rights will be promoted and will prosper in Ecuador.

On 2 October, here in the General Assembly, the Constitutional President of Ecuador, Mr. Jamil Mahuad, who is a dedicated defender of human rights and whom it is my honour to represent here today, affirmed that the best way of commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would be for Ecuador and Peru to sign a peace agreement in 1998, as we did at Brasilia in October of this year, an event which will certainly promote the development of the quality of life of the people of both nations. These were visionary aspirations of President Mahuad, the country's first chief executive in recent years to have truly committed himself to the cause of human rights. This signing of the peace agreement by two fraternal peoples, Ecuador and Peru, who have continued a territorial dispute for over a century and a half and fought a number of conflicts, has strengthened the opening words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which state that:

> "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world".

I would like to end by recalling some of the words of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America:

(*spoke in English*)

"We the people of the United States", and it continues, believe "all men are created equal".

I should also like to pay tribute to some of the personalities who in this country gave their lives in the defence of human and civil rights — Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King and John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I thank the Attorney General of Ecuador.

I would recall the decision by the General Assembly that statements are to be limited to five minutes.

I give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is particularly significant to the people of Chile. It is not a question of mere rhetoric or declaratory statements. For various reasons, Chile and its people are particularly happy to be commemorating this event.

In the first place, Chile was linked to the Declaration from the very beginning, when the then representative of Chile, Ambassador Hernán Santa Cruz, was a member of the group of international personalities who wrote the Declaration. This was at a time when the world was just beginning to fully understand the scope of the devastation caused by the war and the horrors of the holocaust.

Although some visionary people thought that the human race had learned its lesson and that the document being written would avoid further suffering, my country, Chile, unfortunately understood how fragile this idea of respect for the human person is when our hundred-year-old democracy was disrupted. It was in those difficult circumstances in our life as a nation that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights became even more

important to the people of Chile because it offered some direction, a constant guide for those who believe that dignity and respect for the human being cannot be trampled on under any circumstances or under any pretext.

For Chile the universality of human rights means that we have to recognize the dignity of all inhabitants of the earth regardless of their culture, religion, social status, ethnic origin or traditions and regardless of the level of development or the cultural particularities that can be used to justify limits on human rights recognized in the Declaration whose fiftieth anniversary we are celebrating today.

This special occasion should enable the international community to intensify its efforts to make the principles contained in the Declaration something real and tangible for all people. Much has been accomplished since 1948, but much more remains to be done, for unfortunately there are still millions of human beings whose rights are being violated every day.

The next challenge is the prompt entry into force of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, which was approved in Rome in July this year. It would indeed represent a successful outcome of this commemoration if it were to end with the widespread conviction in the international community that initiating the process of ratification of the Statute should begin so that the Court can start functioning as soon as possible.

On this solemn occasion, my country reiterates its firm commitment to full respect for human rights in Chile as well as its decision to continue contributing to the valuable work being done to promote and protect human rights in all corners of the earth. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights will continue to play the leading role in this task.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sukhumbhand Paribatra, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

Mr. Paribatra (Thailand): It is a great honour and pleasure to be here today and to represent my country in this historic gathering, which is held, not only to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also to reaffirm our common faith in, and our commitment to, the truth and wisdom contained therein.

Over the past half a century, a great deal has been accomplished in the promotion and protection of human rights. But much remains to be done. There are still widespread violations of human rights. Millions of people continue to be subjected to discrimination, persecution and suppression. In many parts of the world, civil society needs to be strengthened so that it can assist the State in the task of promoting and protecting human rights.

The time for debating whether each civilization, each culture, each religion, each race should have the right to define its own concept of human rights is over. Action, not more argument, is needed. All of us in the international community need to pool our knowledge and wisdom, our experiences and insights, so that a truly effective global partnership for human rights can be established.

Thailand stands ready to play its part in the forging of this global partnership. Thailand is honoured to have joined other members in sponsoring the resolution containing the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. In addition, we are in the process of becoming a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The delegation of Thailand is proud to say that the promotion and protection of human rights is now a matter of the highest priority for our country. Last year, a new Constitution was promulgated. It is the most progressive and comprehensive in our history. It not only serves to strengthen democracy and the fundamentals of good governance, but also contains provisions for guaranteeing the dignity of the individual and the rights of the people. A national commission on human rights is in the process of being established. It will be assisted in the discharge of its responsibilities by parliamentary ombudsmen and an administrative court, as well as by a national committee to formulate policy and an action plan on human rights. Since the promulgation of the new Constitution, a number of laws have been passed or are being considered by Parliament which offer more extensive rights and freedom to the poor and the underprivileged. These include the protection of labour in accordance with the main principles and guidelines of the International Labour Organization. This year, the Royal Thai Government has also organized activities to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights. These include an international seminar on human rights and business ethics.

For the first time, human rights have been included as an integral part of our foreign policy. In his policy statement before Parliament in November 1997, Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai pledged that Thailand would play an active role in the promotion and protection of human rights in the international arena. Thailand is not a giant among nations. Moreover, we are faced with a severe financial crisis and an economic downturn. With all too little in the way of resources, our aspiration to be a good global citizen is subjected to many constraints. But we intend to make a meaningful contribution to the cause of human rights. We intend to participate actively in such forums as the United Nations. We intend to join other members of the international community in activities related to the promotion and protection of human rights. We intend to continue to be engaged in humanitarian causes, such as demining and providing temporary shelter for displaced persons.

We intend to support the establishment of a human rights mechanism within the Association of South-East Asian Nations. And in our own way, as best we can, we intend to encourage our friends near and far to bring about positive changes in their outlooks and policies.

We Thais are not crusaders by nature or inclination. We do not indulge in excesses of idealism. We see efforts to promote and to protect human rights not as a crusade or as the fulfilment of ideals, but as a global imperative based upon sober realities. The progress of humanity must be a total process. Advancement in material well-being is ultimately meaningless if there are no guarantees of rights and freedoms for individuals both to enjoy that material well-being and to seek ways and means of enhancing their own potential as human beings. Development and human rights are two sides of the same coin. Efforts to promote economic development must be accompanied by the promotion and protection of human rights.

With firm belief in this global imperative, on this occasion the Royal Thai Government would like once more to pledge its commitment to the truth and wisdom enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I call next on the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My country joins in commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stating its great pleasure at today's events. We warmly congratulate the distinguished citizens of the world who were recognized this morning for their contribution to the cause of human rights.

Colombia feels honoured to have participated in the session of the General Assembly, held at Paris in 1948, at which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. The intention of the members of the Assembly was to close the bitter chapter of a war that had brought misery to a large part of humanity and to lay the foundations of a universal civilization in which respect for human rights might prevail.

Five decades later the international community is wholly convinced that respect for human rights lies at the core of the proper functioning of society and of harmonious coexistence among its members. Thus, every effort to guarantee the full exercise of human rights, civil and political as well as economic and cultural, contributes to world peace. And likewise, the elimination of conflicts, be they internal or external, would foster respect for those rights.

Allow me to turn to my own country and reiterate the unswerving commitment of the Administration of President Andrés Pastrana to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights in Colombia. In view of the importance we attach to that commitment, coordination of this matter been directly entrusted to the Vice-President of the Republic. On this very day, the main elements of our national policy have been announced in our capital.

At the same time, the Government of Colombia, wishing to highlight the significance of this commemoration and of international cooperation for human rights, signed a few hours ago the Statute of the International Criminal Court. This associates our country with an initiative of worldwide interest. The Government will promote in Congress debate on a bill leading to ratification of the Statute, and will support constitutional and legislative reforms needed to bring this international mechanism into full operation in Colombia.

Colombia is aware of the challenges it faces in granting its citizens the full exercise of their human rights. To eliminate the violence caused by armed groups is one of the most pressing issues. For that reason, we condemn the use of mines having indiscriminate effects by non-State actors in the ongoing internal conflict, and we insist again that this practice, which violates the rights

of the civilian population, be strongly condemned by the international community.

My Government is aware of the problem of impunity, and it will press on with investigations of human rights violations through a special organ that will comprise the offices of the Vice-President, the Minister of the Interior, the Attorney-General and the Prosecutor-General.

In accordance with Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which the General Assembly adopted yesterday, we will strengthen existing guarantees for the exercise by human rights defenders of their activities in Colombia, and will pursue to its conclusion the investigation of the deaths of a number of human rights defenders in our country. Several indictments and orders of detention have already been issued against persons implicated in these criminal acts.

International cooperation is extremely important in carrying out these endeavours. Colombia hopes that representation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will continue and be strengthened in our country. We would also like broader support for programmes to care for the victims of internal displacement. We have also requested congressional approval for Protocol II, on landmines, to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that my country will continue to participate in the dialogue being carried out by the international community in the various forums of the United Nations — particularly at the Commission on Human Rights, of which we will be a member beginning next March — in order to put into practice the exercise of human rights in the world.

Through our desires and actions we aspire to build the universal civilization based on respect for human rights proposed by the General Assembly in 1948, and we want to contribute our efforts to ensuring that future generations of human beings can live in peace.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I now call on the representative of Peru.

Mr. Guillén (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly on the occasion of this commemoration, which is so special for both for the United Nations and for the international system as a whole. Fifty years ago in the General Assembly, on a day just like today, we the Member States of the Organization adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has became the cornerstone of a set of common standards and values that are applicable to all peoples and nations.

With the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, most of our countries envisioned that a new era had dawned, entailing the clear need to make the human person the be-all and end-all of society and State. In this way, the traditional polarization between human rights and national sovereignty, and between individual freedom and the common weal, began to evolve quickly and constructively. On the one hand, we witnessed the creation of new jurisdictional mechanisms at the international level, and on the other hand we began to define political and civil rights and to distinguish them from economic, social and cultural rights. Strictly speaking, both categories are individual rights, but in one instance the State has a certain duty as guarantor and an obligation not to act, in order to avoid interfering with the free exercise of rights. In the other instance, in addition to its role as guarantor, the State has an obligation to act, in order to create the conditions necessary for peoples to exercise their rights.

As a direct result of the Declaration, in the last five decades there has developed a system of protection that is jurisdictional and non-jurisdictional, legal and political, multilateral and bilateral. That system serves to make human rights, to a greater or lesser extent, an essential aspect of relations between States and individuals, and this is unprecedented in history. Following the adoption of the Declaration, the United Nations drew up, among other instruments, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention for the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In the context of the overall trend in the contemporary international system with regard to the concept of the relationship between the individual and society, the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights was convened as an effort by all the actors of the system to inscribe the issue of human rights as a priority on the international agenda and to make progress in the search for common objectives that would further expand its development. Because of their importance and far-reaching effects, special attention should be given in future debates to the process of developing new legal principles to overcome poverty and destitution, restore the value of the dignity of the human being, actually make it possible for people to achieve freedom and give real effect to the declarations. The right to development is emerging very clearly within this framework as a kind of catalyst between minimalist and maximalist positions and between mainstream and unorthodox approaches that, in any event, reflect a debate that is taking place between civil and political societies with different kinds of institutional and representative constituencies, such as those of the developed and developing countries.

We can say with absolute conviction today that the Universal Declaration has played a far-reaching role since 1948 in the emergence of these new legal principles, bringing about a corpus of positive law that is still evolving but that is nevertheless substantive. The task, the challenge now before us all, societies and individuals, is to be open enough to allow for a certain homogeneity to emerge among States that makes possible the continued exploration and creation of the necessary conditions for a greater normative development of human rights that will eventually endow them with a more effective system of safeguards at both the jurisdictional and non-jurisdictional level. The effort must not be reduced to mere mechanisms that are limited to condemning violations of human rights. The real objective is to curtail the conditions of material inequality that prevent individuals from fully exercising their human rights in their respective societies.

Peru, as a founding Member of the United Nations, participated actively in the drafting of the Universal Declaration. In commemorating its fiftieth anniversary today, we continue to work to apply its principles and to incorporate its provisions into our legislation, while also disseminating information and educating people about human rights. The defence, promotion, protection and development of human rights is a priority and a responsibility for Peruvians. It is for this reason that we defend principles of the universality, indivisibility, comprehensiveness and non-discriminatory application of human rights.

The concept of sustainable human development drives the national policy on human rights in Peru and is an integral part of our multidimensional and comprehensive policy that revalues individuals and human life while linking them to their own environment. In this respect, we have come to understand that the participation of civil society, particularly in the promotion of human rights, gives significant support to the development of human rights. Therefore, in accordance with the new dynamic of quasi-jurisdictional protection, we have established and codified the office of the ombudsman. We have also deemed it appropriate to establish a Ministry for the promotion of women and human development, so that we can truly attend to the most vulnerable sectors of our society, such as children, the elderly, the disabled, women and indigenous peoples.

With regard to international procedures and mechanisms to monitor human rights situations, Peru's actions are based on transparency, dialogue and cooperation as the fundamental principles to promote real protection for the human being as the very essence of respect for human rights. Thus, if we are to have a common and shared vision on this issue, it will depend precisely on our having a complete understanding of the realities of States.

To abide by principles of human rights is to abide by treaties, and abiding by treaties has been the cornerstone of Peru's foreign policy. Peru is pleased that after 56 years we now have completed, signed and ratified a treaty with brotherly countries. This was the focus and the essence of the Rio de Janeiro presidential paper. The General Assembly will be receiving documents informing it about this event.

While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has provided the basis for human rights, the universal scope that the United Nations has attained makes it the natural forum to develop and secure further the standards and values that we must use in order to confer dignity upon the human being. The main responsibility of States is ultimately to reconcile political wills to allow real achievements to be made in the area of the essential rights of the human being.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I now call on the representative of China.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted shortly after the end of the Second World War, and it is a matter of significance that we are solemnly commemorating today the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration. The Declaration was the first international instrument to spell out systematically the idea of respect for and the protection of human rights. It demonstrated the ardent desire of the world's people to eliminate war, maintain peace, achieve development and protect human rights. Over the past half century since the adoption of the Declaration, peace has been restored on the ruins of the Second World War and nearly 100 nations have attained national independence by breaking free of colonialist shackles. Without exaggeration this can be considered the greatest achievement of the global cause of human rights. After the Universal Declaration, the United Nations drew up the Declaration on the Right to Development, and the rights of women, children and the disabled have also been universally recognized. The concept of human rights therefore covers a much wider range of areas.

China values highly the positive role of international human rights instruments in promoting and protecting human rights. China has acceded to 17 international covenants in the field of human rights and signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. China has all along attached importance to its cooperation with the Organization in the field of human rights. During the visit to China last September by Mrs. Robinson, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the two sides reached wide-ranging consensus on further developing and enhancing their exchanges and cooperation and signed a memorandum of intent for the development of this cooperation.

China is a developing country with a population of 1.2 billion. We know all too well the crucial importance of the right to existence and the right to development. Through efforts of several decades, China has now basically solved the problem of providing adequate food and clothing to its population, which accounts for one fifth of the world's total, and the Chinese people's livelihood has greatly improved. This is a major contribution both to China and to the global cause of human rights. As a country governed by the rule of law, China attaches equal importance to the individual rights of its people. It respects and protects civil and political rights and opposes activities that violate the legitimate rights of its people.

Today, as humanity is about to enter the twenty-first century, the world is far from tranquil, and war and poverty still persist. The realization of the enjoyment of human rights is faced with numerous difficulties and obstacles. How to overcome these difficulties and obstacles is a major concern of the international community. The Chinese Government believes that war is the grossest violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, while peace is the prerequisite for the promotion and protection of human rights. Poverty is the main impediment to the realization of human rights, while development constitutes the basis for the promotion and protection of human rights. To survive and develop are the most basic needs and the essential human rights of human beings. One of the most significant aspects of the Declaration is its recognition of economic, social and cultural rights and of the interdependence and connectedness of all human rights. The international community should settle the differences and disputes among nations through peaceful means on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations, without resorting to the use of force or the threat of its use. The international community should take concrete steps to establish a fair and just new international political and economic order with a view to helping developing countries overcome the obstacles to their economic development and creating the necessary external environment for the realization of human rights, including the right to development.

The 50 years since the adoption of the Declaration provides us with experience and lessons in the development of the cause of human rights. We believe that, however diverse the existing cultural traditions in the world may be, they have at least one positive element in common: respect for human rights. Like anything else in the world, human rights are also in a gradually advancing process of change and development. Respecting, absorbing and carrying on the civilizations of all countries in the world will help enrich and enhance the concept of human rights and contribute to the healthy development of the global cause of human rights in all its aspects. The Chinese Government maintains that to jointly promote the healthy development of human rights, countries should have more exchanges, enhance understanding, enlarge common ground and narrow differences on the basis of equality and mutual respect. Dialogue and cooperation should take the place of confrontation and conflict. The Chinese Government is willing to join hands with other countries to promote the development of the cause of human rights and to bring a peaceful, secure, stable and prosperous world into the twenty-first century.

Mr. Gorita (Romania): My country fully subscribed to the statement delivered by the Austrian delegation on behalf of the European Union. Therefore, I will focus on some specific aspects.

Respect for human rights is a cornerstone of the United Nations that has guided the Organization's activities ever since its foundation. At the same time, the belief in fundamental freedoms has become, in the late twentieth century, one of the moral visions inspiring peoples and nations throughout the world.

The commemoration this year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has provided major opportunities to assess the progress achieved so far, as well as the remaining difficulties and new challenges in the promotion and protection of human rights. It has also been a good occasion for setting the agenda of human rights worldwide as we move into the third millennium.

Proclaimed by the General Assembly, on 10 December 1948, as a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations", the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been further completed and defined by important human rights conventions and declarations. Its basic principles and orientations — stemming from the major assumption that, as the Preamble states, "the inherent dignity ... of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" — have been incorporated into the national laws of countries of all cultural traditions from all over the world.

It is worth highlighting, in this context, the importance of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, which broke new ground in the consolidation of international human rights standards and machinery and placed human rights in the framework of development and democracy.

The theme of the fiftieth anniversary — "All Human Rights for All" — fully reflects the major principles of the universality, indivisibility and interrelationship of all human rights and highlights the fact that civil, political, cultural, economic and social rights should be addressed in their totality. It also emphasizes that, while Governments bear the primary responsibility in the promotion and protection of human rights, this goal cannot be attained without the valuable contribution of all actors of civil society, of all individuals and groups who have dedicated their lives to human rights.

Therefore, we welcome the adoption, in this International Year of Human Rights, of the Declaration on the Tight and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. This important accomplishment has been naturally completed today by the awarding of the United Nations human rights prizes.

My delegation appreciates the steady attention Secretary-General Kofi Annan has given to respect for human rights in the reform process of the Organization by placing it among the priority objectives of the United Nations.

At the same time, we commend the remarkable work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, accomplished under the guidance of the two prominent personalities who have so far assumed this function — Mr. José Ayala Lasso and Mrs. Mary Robinson — in strengthening the United Nations human rights programme and facilitating a rights-based approach throughout the United Nations system. Noteworthy are the important steps taken in strengthening the United Nations human rights machinery and ensuring a balanced treatment of all human rights, including through an increased interest in the right to development and the issues of gender equality.

The promotion and protection of human rights have acquired particular significance for Romania in the context of the democratic transformation it has undergone since 1989. My country adhered to all major international human rights instruments and committed itself, with all openness, to the international reporting procedures. Moreover, it adhered to the European Convention on Human Rights and to other important conventions of the Council of Europe setting the highest standards in the matter.

Constant steps have been taken for bettering and updating the national legal and institutional framework, in accordance with the requirements of the rule of law, political pluralism and respect for human rights. For example, in 1997, the institution of Human Rights Ombudsman was set up in order to defend citizens' rights and freedoms.

Within the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, Romania has been carrying out a vast national programme of action targeted towards consolidating respect for fundamental freedoms and

democratic values through education and information. It has brought together governmental representatives, various actors from civil society, national human rights institutions, academics and other personalities in joint endeavours to achieve human rights objectives.

The protection of the rights of the child represents one of the major concerns of the Government of Romania. Likewise, the objective of ensuring gender equality is regarded as a prerequisite for sound and democratic development of the society.

The overall activity of human rights protection is being carried out in Romania in keeping with the principles and guidelines of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with the Vienna commitments.

There is a growing awareness that strengthening human rights is closely related to the strengthening of democracy, good governance and the rule of law. I wish to recall, in this context, the international movement of new or restored democracies which, over the past 10 years, has embraced all the continents and has been conducted in cooperation with the United Nations. My country had the honour to host, in September 1997, the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. The principles and orientations of the three International Conferences organized so far on this topic highlight the idea that a democratic system of government, based on full respect for human rights and the rule of law, provides the best framework for ensuring lasting solutions to the political, economic and social problems of any society.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the conviction of my delegation that we should use the momentum created by the Human Rights Year, 1998, to reinforce our common efforts aimed at the full implementation of international human rights standards and norms.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Russian*): I now call on the Minister of Justice of Lithuania, Mr. Vytautas Pakalniskis.

Mr. Pakalniškis (Lithuania) (*spoke in Lithuanian: English text furnished by the delegation*): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, I would like to sincerely congratulate the winners of the Human Rights Prizes. Lithuania associated itself and fully supports with the statement of the European Union presented today by the representative of Austria.

Fifty years ago, shocked by the Second World War, which subjected millions of individuals to unbearable torment, stalled the development of States and forcibly interrupted their statehood, humankind undertook to found a system based on international law and respect for the protection of human rights.

The President took the Chair.

The decades that followed brought inevitable changes in the international political climate, the establishment of regional organizations, reform or collapse of totalitarian regimes, a strong and more active civil society and an expansion of the network of non-governmental organizations. The international community also gradually modified the doctrines of international law that recognized States as the only subject of international law and granted them exceptional power over decisions on domestic issues within their jurisdiction. These changes further contributed to the development of the theories of the protection of human rights and allowed the definition of human rights by Louis Henkin to be incorporated into the United Nations system of human rights protection.

Today, 50 years later, the international community can be proud of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — the instrument that declares that human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, the instrument that has developed the system of the United Nations conventions for the protection of human rights, which in their turn laid down legal standards for the abolition of racial discrimination and the promotion of political, civil, economic and social rights, the instrument that has been accepted by the entire world community. This Declaration, together with other United Nations conventions for the protection of human rights, has become an integral part of the Lithuanian legal system, without any reservations.

The Secretary-General's encouragement of integrating human rights protection into all spheres of United Nations activities, the dynamic functioning of the United Nations High Commissioners for Human Rights and for Refugees and the intended reform of treaty bodies' control mechanisms bring hope that in the near future the United Nations system, in addition to acquiring universal scope, will also effectively protect the rights of the individual.

In order to achieve the universal effectiveness of the system of human rights protection, we have to recognize,

in my opinion, two essential points. First, States must pursue moral domestic policies that would ensure fundamental human rights and freedoms for their residents. We must educate individuals who understand their rights and duties to the State. We must create a State capable of producing such individuals. Contemporary history confirms that respect for the rights of minorities often becomes an indicator of the internal moral policy of the State. We should strive for States' attitudes towards minorities that would prove them tolerant, without xenophobia, racism or anti-Semitism. Therefore, let us extend our focus from the development of progressive legal norms or their incorporation into national legal systems to the development of education.

The second aspect is closely related. The potential of regional structures should be fully employed in the activities of the United Nations. Documents for the protection of human rights of the 1975 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Helsinki process, made possible in the then totalitarian States of Eastern and Central Europe the emergence of active political movements that formed individuals' attitudes to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and personal inviolability. The movements and their leaders limited authoritarian powers and created a conscious society, a part of which undertook peaceful reforms in the region in 1988. That was only a part of the potential that could have been used during the cold-war period. The changes in political climate, the application of the experience of the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of American States and other regional structures with effectively functioning structures for the protection of human rights have opened up prospects for close, long-term cooperation in human rights protection, in the maintenance of peace and in the distribution of functions. The experience of regional organizations, in my opinion, will facilitate a deeper comprehension of the complexity of the problems the international community faces and will contribute to the reaching of universally accepted decisions.

The influence of civil society, the attention of the international community and regional organizations are the keys to the settlement of fundamental issues. Due to the moratorium on capital punishment declared by the President of the Republic in 1995, Lithuania may be considered, de facto, a State that has abolished the practice. It is significant that yesterday, upon the request of the Lithuanian Parliament, the Constitutional Court of Lithuania held that capital punishment contradicts the Constitution. This is an essential step towards the abolition of capital punishment. I believe that the new criminal code will provide for no capital punishment.

Lithuania's accession to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, and to the Sixth Protocol of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms will, in the near future, support the progressive aspirations of the international community on this issue.

Today, Lithuania became the sixty-sixth State to sign the Statute of the International Criminal Court. The establishment of this powerful international instrument for the enforcement of international criminal law will save many lives and free society from ethnic cleansing and from the horror of physical and psychological mutilation. To put it in the words of Mr. Philippe Kirsch, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole at the Rome Conference:

> "A clarion call has gone out to potential perpetrators of unspeakable atrocities that the world is not going to stand by silently and watch the commission of outrageous violations of international law."

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to consult members regarding the organization of the rest of the commemorative meetings.

As of now, we still have 89 speakers remaining on the list. Even in the optimistic case that every statement were to last five minutes, it would still take approximately eight hours of meeting time, at least, to exhaust the list.

As members are aware, this meeting will adjourn at 6 p.m. and the next will begin at 9.30 p.m. If Member States wish to hear all the speakers on the list tonight, the evening meeting will have to continue until 3 a.m. or 4 a.m.

In view of this, I should like to propose a compromise solution that we adjourn this meeting at 6 p.m., as planned, resume at 9.30 p.m. and continue until 12 midnight. It would seem reasonable that the entire day will have been devoted to this commemoration and that we continue to hear the remaining speakers at 10 a.m. tomorrow. I know that some delegations have expressed their interest in not reopening the session after Mr. Pavarotti's performance, but that others wish to

continue. We are trying to coordinate both positions by setting a limit that we think would be reasonable and in keeping with the number of speakers remaining on the list.

If there is no substantive objection, may I take it that the General Assembly wishes to act accordingly?

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Malta.

Mr. Saliba (Malta): First of all, I must commend you, Sir, on the way you always succeed in finding the middle way. You are very good at it.

I feel honoured and privileged to address the General Assembly today on the occasion of this important anniversary. The United Nations is uniquely positioned to promote and protect the universal enjoyment of human dignity. Significantly, one of the first tasks that this Organization set itself was the drafting of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of its adoption by this Assembly, we renew our commitment to its content. That document neither is outdated, nor can it be replaced.

Malta's track record in the sphere of human rights is one it is proud of. Malta's unconditional commitment to the protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the individual are entrenched in chapter VI of its Constitution. Furthermore, we attach fundamental importance to the essential role that the United Nations is called upon to fulfil in the promotion of human rights. During this year's general debate of the General Assembly, my Deputy Prime Minister made the following observations in regard to the Declaration being commemorated today:

> "There is, however, a significant lack in this Declaration. It is an instrument with no judicial mechanisms and sanctions. Has the time arrived to learn from the experience of the regional human rights conventions, in particular the European Convention, which through its mechanisms instituted the European Court of Human Rights and through the right of individual petition further guarantees a judicial process aimed at ensuring effective enforcement?" (*A/53/PV.19, p. 2*)

Human rights have value only if they become living realities in a society. Perhaps there is no more tiring hypocrisy than living with human rights proclaimed on paper and disregarded in practice. It is a saddening fact that, on the eve of the twenty-first century, human beings are still living in subhuman conditions with their fundamental human rights denied. As appropriately stated by the High Commissioner for Human Rights,

> "in 50 years since the United Nations Universal Declaration set out the basic standards of human rights, there has been systematic violation of almost every one of its 30 articles".

It is against this discouraging backdrop that Malta feels the urgent need to do its part, no matter how small, to help eradicate suffering from this world and promote and protect human rights.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action reaffirm a number of principles that Malta considers to be of paramount importance in this context. Primary among these are the universal nature of these rights and freedoms, which the Declaration holds to be beyond question, and the recognition that their promotion and protection is both a primary objective of the United Nations as well as a legitimate concern of the international community. It is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Malta would also like to highlight the Vienna Declaration's reaffirmation of the right to development as a universal and inalienable right, with the person as the central subject of development. We believe that, while development facilitates the enjoyment of all human rights, the lack of development may not be invoked to justify the abridgement of internationally recognized human rights.

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Government of Malta held a number of activities, amongst which were the publication and distribution of the Declaration in the Maltese language and the publication of a questionnaire in the form of a booklet addressed to school children to test their knowledge of the Universal Declaration.

In conclusion, this delegation would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the hundreds of non-governmental organizations for their important contribution to increasing public awareness of human rights issues, to their conduct of education, training and research in this field, and to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Fifty years ago today, on 10 December 1948, the international community, with more courage than lyricism, indicated that recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. That stellar moment in the history of mankind, showed us, in terms both simple and fundamental, a rational path to follow, a concrete programme aimed at ensuring, with the law as its instrument, the coexistence of men and women on dignified and unshakable bases.

What was adopted then was not just one more multilateral treaty. On the contrary, that Declaration represented an important qualitative difference in the concept of an international community and it obtained and ensured the commitment of all United Nations Member States to act in favour of universal and effective respect for the full range of rights inherent to the individual.

During these five decades, the Universal Declaration has become a constant and inexhaustible source for the progressive creation of a group of legal instruments and national, regional and international institutions dedicated to the protection and the promotion of all human rights.

The International Covenants, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination constitute irrefutable proof of the greatness of the Declaration, which has transcended its beginnings to become a genuine and effective beacon of light that has illuminated and guided the international community over the past 50 years.

Together with this international *corpus juris*, the spirit and the simple and practical meaning of the Universal Declaration has also been reflected in the establishment of a number of wide-ranging institutions that promote and protect the observance of fundamental freedoms. The various commissions and committees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, of which my country is a proud supporter, constitute a strong institutional structure with solid ethical and moral foundations, which struggles daily throughout the world to ensure all men and women respect for their rights.

However, no one can deny that during these 50 years our experience in establishing an effective system to implement rights enumerated in the Declaration and subsequently developed in agreements has been inadequate, and that in 1998 we cannot attend this forum with the same joy as did our predecessors five decades ago and declare total victory in this noble and lofty cause.

Although we have made much progress along the long path embarked upon in 1948, and although we can say that since the adoption of the Universal Declaration respect for human rights has advanced in many places and the world in general may seem more liveable, the harsh and undeniable reality is that much remains to be done and we are still indebted to those who have marked the way for us. This duty, this responsibility, which we have not completely fulfilled, this circle we have not yet closed, includes matters as vital as having all United Nations Member States, without exception, adhere to all human rights multilateral instruments and it entails unconditionally acceptance by all of us of the competence of the international specialized agencies.

Fundamentally, it means the continuity, consolidation and deepening of the progressive and effective development of the global system for the promotion and the protection of human rights through the designing and establishment of genuine, solid jurisdictional institutions, such as the recently created International Criminal Court, which pursue and punish violations and oppose impunity on the part of those who have violated fundamental freedoms of men and women in any part of the world and under any circumstances.

It necessarily presupposes that we must advance towards the definition and full recognition of issues that, although incorporated in the list of human rights, thus far have not been sufficiently specified and developed, such as resolute protection of the rights of women, the promotion and the true protection of economic and social rights and the acceptance, active participation and full incorporation of civil society in the national, regional and multilateral systems for the promotion and the protection of fundamental freedoms.

Fifty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration, we are witnessing what our Secretary-General has called the emergence of a new universal conscience. One year before the new millennium, although full observance of all human rights remains an idea shared by all, and the construction of the vast temple

to which our mentor René Cassin referred remains unfinished, Costa Rica is hopeful that we are witnessing a new, stellar moment in the history of humankind in which a new culture of peace and tolerance is beginning to take shape, allowing us to meet the new challenges and opportunities of that shining future. The triumph of the human being in the twenty-first century will therefore depend on the full respect and observance of all human rights being the responsibility of each of us and of all humankind.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Ghafoor (Pakistan): The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1948 was essentially a response to the excesses perpetrated by the occupying forces against civilian populations during the Second World War. It reflected the conviction that protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms constituted the basis for the maintenance of international peace.

The Declaration marked the beginning of the development of human rights law, as distinct from the law of war. The concepts of human rights, however, were not new. Mankind had known these principles since its birth. They had their spiritual and philosophical underpinnings in religion and society.

The monotheistic religions have always regarded the dignity and worth of human beings as sacred and inviolable. Their common beliefs provided the philosophical basis for equality of all human beings, a common humanity and a universal brotherhood. Their traditional value systems evolved over centuries in various cultures, and societies further sanctified these fundamental principles.

The adoption of the Universal Declaration, nevertheless, invigorated the worldwide movement for human rights. In the past five decades, classical colonialization has run its course, apartheid has died, there has existed a much greater awareness about the rights of weaker segments of society than ever before and human rights law has become a mainstream subject in law schools.

The United Nations and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and its mechanisms and procedures have played an important role in this effort. Civil society, represented by non-governmental organizations, both national and international, has played a pivotal role in revolutionizing the international human rights movement. All of them deserve our applause for their untiring efforts in promoting the dignity of the human person.

But the question remains, have we achieved the vision and objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Despite an impressive array of legal instruments which have been codified over the past five decades, I am afraid the response remains far from positive.

Racism is still alive, women and children continue to suffer, particularly in armed conflicts, and the situation of refugees, minorities and other vulnerable groups is far from satisfactory.

Even today, brutal and gross violations of human rights continue to occur in various parts of the world. Genocide in the Great Lakes region, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, massacres in Kosovo and continued human rights violations in Palestine and Kashmir, where people are struggling for their right to self-determination, reflect the insensitivity of perpetrators of such heinous crimes against humanity.

An issue of particular concern for us has been the recent tendency in some quarters to equate Islam with fundamentalism and terrorism. In some societies Muslims have become a favourite target of racist groups and hate propaganda. This "Islamophobia" has grave implications for our endeavours to build a peaceful world. Islam is a religion of peace. It teaches brotherhood and abhors extremism and fanaticism. We should resist the temptation of inventing imaginary enemies to satisfy narrow political motives.

We must not be taken in by the thesis of a clash of civilizations. Instead, we must work to promote coexistence among civilizations. Mankind can and should learn from the enriching experience of various civilizations. We welcome the recent initiative of the General Assembly which calls for dialogue among civilizations. We regard the designation of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations as a positive step in this direction.

Let us face the reality that interpretational problems still exist with some of the concepts being promoted under the rubric of human rights. We must appreciate the fact that every society has its own cultural and religious ethos, which must be respected. Experience shows that

the collapse of a local system of values invariably leads to egregious human rights violations and social disintegration. The developments in the Great Lakes region are the most instructive reminder of this tragedy.

We therefore should endeavour to strengthen existing synergies between local values and human rights law. Human rights should not be used for finger-pointing and for political considerations. This evokes resistance and engenders a confrontation which negates the cause of human rights. Instead, the promotion of human rights should be based on cooperation and constructive engagement among nations and countries.

The existence of widespread poverty and underdevelopment constitute major impediments to the full enjoyment of all human rights by people in the developing countries. Over a billion people live in conditions of abject poverty. This number is increasing at an alarming speed, as the gap between the rich and poor continues to widen. Development and the eradication of poverty should be identified as priority issues for the United Nations in the next century. It is our conviction that a faithful implementation of the right to development, which provides an indispensable link between political and economic rights, would facilitate the creation of an enabling environment for the full enjoyment of all human rights by all. It would also lay a solid foundation for the globalization of prosperity and peace, which is the true vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We owe this to our future generations.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda): As we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and as we end today the Human Rights Year which began on 10 December 1997, it is fitting to recognize with satisfaction the long journey and the progress that has been made since 1948, when the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since then, vigorous efforts have been made by the international community to promote and protect the development of those rights.

Today's commemoration is not only an opportunity to celebrate but also a challenge to give a new push to human rights, which need to be promoted and strengthened worldwide. It is equally important that we assess our progress so as to chart new ways for the future development of human rights as a birthright of all peoples.

Notable among the developments in the field of human rights was the development of the rights of women and the resultant narrowing of the gender gap. The struggle for women's rights has gained momentum during the past two decades. Beginning with the 1975 World Conference of the International Women's Year and the International Women's Year Tribune in Mexico City, and continuing through the world conferences and non-governmental organization forums of 1980, in Copenhagen and 1985, in Nairobi, and the series of agenda-setting United Nations world conferences and non-governmental organization forums of the 1990s that culminated in the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, women have developed and discovered new skills and tools that they are now using to leverage for change on behalf of women's rights at global, national and community levels.

The following is just one example among many: in the four-year period between 1992 and 1996, international conferences acknowledged and pledged to advance reproductive rights. Such recognition is critical in advancing women's human rights. Of equal importance is the right of women to combat all forms of violence against women.

An equally significant development and milestone is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and came into force on 2 September 1990. The Convention provided the international community with a legal instrument that binds all States parties to a set of norms designed to protect our future generations. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is one of those rare legal texts that embody a vision of the future and reaffirm the link established by the Charter between future generations and human rights. It is, however, one of the ironies of history that one of the world's great Powers has found it acceptable not to ratify this Convention.

Ironically, after the end of the cold war, the world is experiencing a growing disparity between North and South in wealth and access to resources. Globalization has coincided with increasing social problems, poverty and joblessness. There is a strong link between human rights and development.

It is often asserted that human values, far from being universal, vary a great deal according to different cultural perspectives. Thus, cultural relativism is assumed to be in conflict with the concept of universal human

rights. This presumed conflict would not exist if we remembered the famous statement by one of the most illustrious champions of human rights, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, who asked, "Where, after all, do human rights begin?" And she answered, "In small places, close to home". In other words, human rights are universal rights, felt in their universality. Their indivisibility and interdependence are manifested in the fact that they are mutually reinforcing. That interdependence has made human rights essential benchmarks for democratic governance.

Turning specifically to Africa, we can rightly say that the root cause of endless conflict is the absence, denial or violation of human rights. But with the support of its friends and the United Nations, Africa can buttress human rights and consolidate peace, democracy and reconstruction after years of war, turmoil and suffering. To achieve durable peace, we need to create durable institutional structures which would give substance to the goal set out in the United Nations Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Before I conclude, allow me to refer very briefly to some notable achievements in Uganda during the past 12 years under the National Resistance Movement Government and the leadership of President Museveni. After decades of brutal dictatorship, when human rights were trampled underfoot and swept away, the rule of law has been restored. There is security of life and property. Under the new Constitution, promulgated in 1995, democratic governance to empower the grass roots and build civil society is being implemented. An independent Human Rights Commission with a Chairperson and five Commissioners was established in 1996. Not only does it undertake human rights education, lecture series and workshops, but it also investigates violations of human rights, including those by government. The progress that has been made so far is the result of political will and of a firm commitment at the top, which sees respect for the dignity of all Ugandans as the supreme goal of the Government.

In conclusion, let us pay tribute to the achievements of the past 50 years and let us never forget the words of the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who said that in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations stated in clear and simple terms the rights which belong equally to every person. He said "The rights belong to you. They are yours." Human rights are not Western rights.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I give the floor to the Minister of the Interior of Venezuela, Mr. Asdrúbal Aguiar.

Mr. Aguiar (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Venezuela and its Government are rightly pleased to participate in this commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I bring a message renewing our people's commitment to the provisions of this great code of human civilization, whose moral and legal force is today indisputable.

If the efforts made at the time of the creation of the Declaration, and the intellect that gave life to it, leave us with a debt of gratitude to the memory of René Cassin, it is no less certain that the promotion of public freedoms as a foundation of the body politic is an inseparable part of the philosophy of Bolívar, which we have made our own.

Today, Venezuela is commemorating the event with solemn acts similar to this one. Exactly a year ago the President of the Republic, Rafael Caldera, responded to the appeal made by the United Nations and entrusted our national commission on human rights with the responsibility for carrying out a broad programme of promotion and dissemination worthy of such a memorable occasion. The national plan of human rights has been perhaps the most significant outcome of the exemplary joint work carried out, in solidarity and without abandoning their various responsibilities, by the national executive branch and the non-governmental human rights organizations. Today, my Government was also to sign a framework agreement with various bodies and agencies of the United Nations system on the promotion of and education in human rights.

Five decades after the adoption of the Universal Declaration, we can say without reservation that this coming together of human rights with the rights of individuals as they relate to their social environment is both the outcome of the various cultural and universal concepts of humankind and of society and the place at which those concepts meet. The Declaration, which is free from grandiloquence and dogmatism, provides a common, timeless foundation for practising pluralism and tolerance and living together in freedom, inspired by the idea of peace among all people.

My Government is conscious of the heavy debt that we still owe and that calls all Venezuelans to shared

action in the search for a perfectible order that would guarantee a stable climate for ensuring respect for human rights. Every day we make considerable efforts to that end. We have honoured our international commitments in this respect. We have joined almost all of the international instruments adopted by the international and regional systems to protect human rights, and we have recognized the mandatory jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

In the recent elections of 8 November and 6 December, in which a decisive majority of Venezuelans participated in an exemplary and civic manner, we remade, without any violence, our entire national political structure and reaffirmed our sacred commitment to peace.

In 1989 the system collapsed because it was based on equality but disregarded freedom. The current system, which is in its infancy, is global and is based on liberty; but it will have the same fate if it disregards equality. That is why, if we are to eradicate intolerance and establish a culture of peace and of human rights, there is no alternative but to get to the very roots of the resentment, radicalization, dogmatism or fatalism of our time. Poverty, ignorance, discrimination and exclusion are the new and modern forms assumed by totalitarianism, the need to do away with which led to the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which we are commemorating today.

Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which, according to René Cassin, was the frontispiece of the temple of human rights, today assumes exemplary value for the forging and the promotion of a social and international order in which proclaimed rights and freedoms can be fully realized. We pay tribute in this regard to the recent adoption in Rome of the Statute of the International Criminal Court and to the adoption yesterday by the Assembly of the human rights defenders Declaration.

On the eve of the new Christian millennium, and as we face the challenges of an era of artificial intelligence, there is an urgent need — as affirmed in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* — for a suitable order to provide for tranquillity, founded on truth, guided by justice, driven and tempered by charity and developed in freedom. Such an order demands that any assault on human rights be not merely condemned in moral and political terms. It must be prevented through legal means established by the international community, which will reinvigorate the weak and sometimes absent State institutions and give meaning to the revitalizing commitment of their essential participants.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on the President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Ms. Astrid Heiberg.

Ms. Heiberg (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): As President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which was founded with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, I am honoured to speak here today as the General Assembly commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today, this Declaration is so universally accepted that one can easily forget what an achievement it was and the tremendous moral and legal impact it has had. It has guided the work to promote, protect and improve human rights worldwide. It has inspired regional human rights mechanisms and has, to a large extent, become international customary law. It is indeed a common ground of values, crossing boundaries and cultures.

I wish to congratulate the Assembly not only for commemorating the Universal Declaration, but for having taken a new, bold step in promoting and expanding the scope of human rights promotion. Yesterday's General Assembly Declaration on human rights defenders is really in the spirit of those who adopted the Universal Declaration 50 years ago, and it breaks new ground for human rights promotion and protection. Not only does it reaffirm the commitment of the United Nations Member States to human rights as universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, but it also declares the rights of those individuals and groups that strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at both national and international levels.

For organizations such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, it is of high importance that all United Nations Member States approve the right of everybody to advocate human rights and their acceptance. The fundamental principles and international humanitarian law are, for us, not only law in books but law in action. It is first and foremost through our humanitarian activities that the movement supports and practises human rights, providing food aid, health services and shelter for the victims of disasters. These humanitarian activities can be

seen as both human rights protection and human rights promotion. They protect human rights by providing services for health and well-being, and they promote human rights in that they restore human dignity, because where human dignity is threatened, the notion of human rights and respect for them will inevitably erode.

However, in dealing with food aid, health care and shelter, and thereby defending human rights, the Federation and other members of the humanitarian community are faced with problems which relate not only to scarce resources, logistics and security, but also to policies imposed by this world Organization — I am referring to United Nations sanctions.

Sanctions are a legitimate tool of diplomacy. As President Woodrow Wilson once put it, they provide a peaceful, silent and deadly remedy. By that logic, sanctions are like unarmed warfare. Just as, according to international humanitarian law, the end does not justify any means in warfare, so also, in the view of the Federation, the end does not justify any means with regard to the imposition of sanctions. Equally, the principle of proportionality suggests that the harm inflicted by sanctions to achieve change should not be out of proportion to the anticipated gains.

Let us be clear: sanctions can kill. They also frequently impoverish most those who are already vulnerable, while in the worst cases actually creating the possibility of greater wealth for those who find ways to exploit the situation through crime and smuggling. In short, sanctions are a blunt instrument, damaging most those who are powerless to effect the political change the international community demands. For the Security Council, imposing sanctions exposes a potentially fundamental contradiction in implementing two of its core principles: promoting peace and promoting human rights. Sanctions are intended to deal with threats to the peace and with human rights violations. But they also risk undermining basic human rights during the course of their implementation.

At the very least, it should be possible to assess the possible negative impact of sanctions and to monitor their effects. One of the fundamental principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement is humanity. We strive to prevent and alleviate human suffering, to protect health and to promote life. Therefore, in the defence of human rights, we look forward to working together with the Assembly and all interested parties in order not only to promote respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also to ensure the enjoyment of human rights by all peoples of the world.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.